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ABSTRACT

Because of its interactive and multimedia nature, the Internet has been highly touted as an increasingly important aspect of elementary and secondary education. Research on Internet use, however, indicates that few teachers are actually integrating this medium into their lesson plans in a meaningful way. The paper discusses how the National Council for the Social Studies (NCSS) has responded to the widespread need, and request from teachers, to be more productive and efficient in their use of the Internet for classroom teaching. Seeking to identify trends in Internet use, a study conducted a content analysis of the number and types of sessions provided at the NCSS annual conferences. NCSS annual meeting program abstracts from all session types, from 1995 to 2001, were examined and transcribed into a database. In analyzing session focus, six categories emerged: (1) sessions devoted to providing an overview or introduction of the Internet; (2) sessions devoted to teaching strategies employing the Internet; (3) sessions devoted to introducing and developing web publishing skills; (4) sessions that introduced specific Web sites or portals; (5) sessions devoted to development of lesson plans or curriculum products; and (6) sessions devoted to research on Internet use. Sessions focusing on teaching strategies were analyzed in detail; eight categories were identified. Results from the analyses were entered into a spreadsheet. Findings were organized into number and percentage of Internet sessions; breakdown of Internet session by organizational affiliation and type of presenter; and breakdown by focus of Internet session presented. However the number of Internet-related sessions presented at NCSS during the seven year period studied amounted to less than five percent of all NCSS sessions. Includes nine notes, four figures, and four tables. Contains 19 references. (BT)

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Trends in Internet Use by Social Studies Educators:

Data From the National Council for the Social Studies Annual Meeting, 1995-2001

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RUNNINGHEAD: Trends in Internet use....

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Introduction

Use of the Internet and the World Wide Web (WWW) has become pervasive in many of our daily lives. Whether engaging in e-commerce (e.g., buying a book at Amazon.com), taking advantage of the wide array of on-line multimedia (e.g., listening to a classical radio station in Cleveland from your living room in Denver) or simply communicating with friends and family (e.g., AOL's InstantMessaging) many Americans consume Internet services on a daily basis. While we recognize the fact that a significant 'digital divide' exists in terms of access to the Internet in the United States, estimates still place the number of active Internet users in the United States at 103 million and the number of Americans with Internet access in their homes at 167 million (Information Please Almanac, 2001).

Data also suggest that Internet access may be even more ubiquitous in the nation's schools. In 2001, 99% of all public schools in the United States--and 100% of all public secondary schools--reported Internet access.[1] In addition, 87% of all K-12 public school classrooms in the United States reported having some type of Internet access in 2001 (Kleiner and Westat, 2002).

Because of its interactive and multimedia nature, the Internet has been highly touted as an increasingly important aspect of both elementary and secondary education. For example, in a nation-wide study of Internet use by teachers, Henry Jay Becker (1999) concluded that "along with word processing, the Internet may be the most valuable of the many computer technologies available to teachers and students (p. 32)." Wilson (1995)

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[1] These figures represent computational estimates based on algorithmic calculations from raw data and, in the case of the secondary estimate, may have been rounded up (from 99.5% to 100%) (National Center for Educational Statistics, 2002).

argued that the Internet has the ability to break down the classroom's physical limitations and to allow students access to experiences well beyond the limited resources available in classrooms and media centers. Braun, Fernlund and White (1997) believed that the use of the Internet can develop students' inquiry and analytical skills. Moreover, many have argued that because of the very nature of the Internet—its relatively unrestricted access to information and media—the social studies are the school discipline most likely to make use of the medium.

Several studies of social studies teachers' use of the Internet have—to some extent--supported these claims. For example, VanFossen (2000) found that many social studies teachers who used the Internet regularly in their classrooms reported positive instructional experiences for their students. One respondent in the study replied:

> Many people say exploratory learning is important. There is no better way for kids to explore a subject than to do it on the 'Net...social studies teachers need to use the Internet. We already have a bad reputation of being boring teachers of a boring subject. (VanFossen, 1999, p. 1)

In spite of this perceived 'fit' with education, and with social studies in particular, however, research on Internet use has also indicated that few teachers are actually integrating this medium into their lesson plans in any meaningful way. Becker (1999) found that nearly a third of teachers surveyed (from grade 4-grade 12) were not using the Internet at all in their classrooms with another forty percent admitting to only 'occasional' use (p. 5). Data suggest that Internet use among social studies teachers is not much better. VanFossen (2000, 2001) found that while more than 85 percent of respondents were employing the Internet in some way for their professional (e.g., planning, research) or personal use (e.g., e-mail, stock quotes), few were using the

medium with students in their classrooms. Two-thirds of respondents had never used the Internet to take students on a 'virtual fieldtrip' of an online museum site and slightly less than half had never developed an interactive lesson that required students to use the Internet to complete some task or assignment (VanFossen, 2001). Additionally, VanFossen (2000) found that more than eighty percent of the social studies teachers who responded wished to be using the Internet more than they currently were.

Why aren't teachers generally, and social studies teacher in particular, using the Internet more? Owens (1999) and VanFossen (2001) found that classroom social studies teachers needed to overcome similar barriers to Internet use: fear, frustration, and lack of curriculum development experience. Moreover, due in part to these types of barriers, tthere is emerging concern that a window of opportunity for classroom use of the Internet—and its potential for changing the way social studies is taught—may be closing. Many are asking: Has the Internet become the videodisk (or Dukane projector, or BetaMax...) of the new millennium? Have social studies teachers come to see the Internet as the Internot:

> "a panacea that doesn't 'pan' out, a way to spend a lot of time learning technology with a disproportionately small return in learning of subject matter. Too often the means becomes the end (VanFossen, 2001, p. 64)."

Purpose and Research Questions

While these results suggest a number of questions about social studies teachers' use of the Internet, very few studies within the field have examined this issue. In fact, with few exceptions, the studies that have been conducted on Internet use in the social studies have focused on pre-service social studies teachers' attitudes towards, and use of, the Internet (Mason, 2001; Owens, 1999; Ehman, 1999). Most concerning, however, is

the fact that very little in-depth study of national trends on social studies teachers use (or non-use) of the Internet in social studies classrooms has been conducted.

This lack of study seems even more incongruous given that the apparent opportunities provided by the Internet would seem to align well with the goals and purposes of the social studies. In addition, as noted above, data have also indicated that social studies teachers desire to incorporate the Internet into their classroom teaching more often. Against this backdrop, one question to ask would be: What is being done to help social studies teachers better integrate Internet technology into their classroom instruction in meaningful ways?

While professional development workshops in the use of technology are, no doubt, made available to social studies teachers on the local, state, and regional level, an additional and logical place to look for the type and degree of technology support provided to social studies teachers would be the annual conference of the National Council for the Social Studies. The National Council for the Social Studies (NCSS), as the name implies, is the national flagship organization for teachers of social studies, and has been providing national leadership in social studies-related areas for more than 80 years. Each year this organization holds an annual conference somewhere in the United States that is attended by 3,000 - 5,000 social studies classroom teachers, supervisors, university educators, and administrators. The conference provides research reports of interest to university faculty and conference and pre-conference workshops on topical issues, curriculum development, and strategies related to the teaching of social studies. The NCSS annual meeting often has more than 800 sessions devoted to improving the field of social studies, and social studies teaching and learning across all contexts. Over

the past seven years how has this organization responded to help social studies teachers take advantage of the rapidly increasing availability of Internet technology in their schools and classrooms? More specifically, how has NCSS responded to the widespread need, and request on the part of teachers, to be more productive and efficient in the their use of the Internet for classroom teaching?

Our initial approach to addressing these questions was to conduct a content analysis of the number and types of sessions provided at the NCSS annual conference. Similar studies have been done in other professional organizations to describe national trends in particular fields (Krider and Ross, 1999; Al-Saleh, 1996; Smith, 1984). Using session abstracts, this study examined the way the Internet was presented at sessions held during the NCSS annual conferences from 1995 - 2001. Specific questions we focused on included:

- What percentage of the total NCSS annual meeting program was devoted to sessions focused on the use of the Internet?
- What types of Internet sessions were offered?
- Who were the presenters of these sessions (e.g., university faculty, classroom teachers, etc.)?
- Over the past seven years what trends emerged for total number of Internet sessions provided, the percentage of program devoted to Internet sessions, the type of Internet session provided, or affiliation of the presenter?
- Have the goals of the Internet sessions (as outlined in the program abstracts) changed over time? That is, are sessions now being directed more toward "expert users" or are sessions still focused on providing overviews of Internet potential use to classroom teachers?

Methodology

In order to answer the various research questions posed in this study, and to determine what, if any, trends in Internet use might be identified, we employed a

modified content analysis technique. Wright (1986) defined content analysis as a technique for:

> systematic classification and description of communication content according to certain usually predetermined categories. It may require quantitative analysis, qualitative analysis or both...it requires that the categories of classification and analysis be clearly and operationally defined so that other researchers can follow them reliably...so that independent coders are likely to agree. It is important to remember, however, that content analysis itself provides no direct data about the nature of the communicator, audience, or effects. Therefore, great caution must be exercised whenever this technique is used for purposes other than classification, description and analysis of the manifest content of the communication (pp. 125-126)."

Content analysis is particularly appropriate for analyzing print communications for trends or for making historical comparisons (Berger, 2000) and content analysis techniques have been used to determine trends in professional fields as diverse as performance and instruction, communications and technology and experiential learning (Smith, 1984; Al-Saleh, 2000; Krider and Ross, 1999). For example, Krider and Ross (1999) conducted a theme analysis of programs from the annual meetings of the National Communication Association (NCA) from 1993 through 1998. The NCA programs were analyzed and five categories or themes emerged. Krider and Ross then developed a matrix of program themes, determined the internal and external plausibility of their matrix and then examined the matrix for additional patterns. Krider and Ross concluded that this methodology allowed them to answer research questions about trends in experiential learning presentations at NCA meetings, which was the primary impetus for their study.

In employing content analysis for the current study, we heeded Wright's (1986) caution not to stray from analysis of the manifest content alone--in this case, the NCSS session abstracts. However, anyone who has attended a national professional meeting has

experienced the 'words and deeds' phenomenon: the abstract for a particular paper or session says one thing and the presentation ends up being on something quite different from the abstract. In conducting the content analysis for the current study we assumed that people submitted NCSS session proposals (of which the published abstract was a required portion) based on what they wanted to present or what they believed they would be presenting at the time the proposal was written, and thus we can ascribe some 'importance' factor to the manifest content in each of the proposal abstracts. That is, the individuals who submitted these abstracts believed these were important topics (to themselves or to the field) at the time the abstracts were written. While individuals may very well have presented entirely something different at the NCSS annual meeting, it is only the manifest content presented in the abstract with which this study deals.

Sample

In the current study, we examined National Council for the Social Studies annual meeting program abstracts from all pre-conference clinic, associated group, poster, research paper, and general sessions presented at NCSS during the period from 1995 to 2001.[2] Berger (2000) indicated that content analysis methods are particularly appropriate for use in such an historical comparative approach. We began by independently generating lists of all sessions each of us felt had a significant Internet focus for each year in question. To be included in the final sample, a session abstract had to describe a proposed session where the Internet was clearly the heart of the presentation; as either the vehicle through which session content and/or process was explored, through which

[2] This analysis did not include business meetings, plenary sessions, or off-site tours. We chose 1995 as a starting point for two reasons. First, this was the first year with any real Internet presentations (8) and second, the WWW as we know it (a large portion of the Internet) was not widely available or user-friendly until several years after Tim Berners-Lee 'invented' it in 1992 (in 1992 there we less than 100 web sites, by 1993, 22,000). By 1995, 50% of K-12 public schools reported Internet access of some kind.

curriculum in the session was developed, or through which most of the session was delivered. These initial lists were then compared, differences were discussed and resolved, and a final sample was agreed upon. Figure 1 presents both an example of one session abstract that was included in the final sample and one that was not. In the first case, it is clear from the session description that the focus of this session is on strategies for implementing and integrating the Internet into the social studies classroom. While the second case also seems to have a focus on the use of the Internet, closer examination reveals that this session abstract describes a session devoted to the examination of toys from various cultures and that the Internet is an ancillary resource (a web site to support the activity) and was not the focus of the session in either content or delivery.

Insert Figure 1 here

Categories of Analysis

Once the sample had been agreed upon, session abstracts were transcribed into a database. These transcriptions were used to conduct the content analysis. Sessions were first classified by type of session (e.g., general, pre-conference clinic) and by affiliation of presenter (e.g., K-12 practitioner, non-governmental organization). We then developed initial categories of analysis for session focus—the 'content' of the session, if you will—and then met to discuss and resolve differences in these initial categories. We then began to "work back and forth between the data and the classification system to verify the accuracy of the system (Patton, 1990, p. 403)." Once a category system was

developed, we independently coded transcripts for abstracts from two of the years in the sample and compared results. Our initial inter-rater reliability was 97%. Berger (2000) indicated that "a reliability level of 90% or higher is considered acceptable (p. 183)." However, we also met to discuss and resolve any remaining differences in our coding.

In our analysis of session focus, six categories emerged. These were (1) sessions devoted to providing an overview of the Internet or an introduction to Internet integration, (2) sessions devoted to teaching strategies employing the Internet, (3) sessions devoted to introducing and developing web publishing skills, (4) sessions that introduced a specific web site or portal[3], (5) sessions devoted to the development of lesson plans or curriculum products, and (6) sessions devoted to research on Internet use. Figure 2 provides illustrative examples of sessions coded as each of the six categories.

Insert Figure 2 here

Following this stage of the analysis, we became very interested in detailed analysis of the sessions that focused on teaching strategies using the Internet. Research has indicated that most teaching strategies that use the Internet in social studies classrooms tend to be low-order. For example, of teachers who regularly use the Internet in their social studies classrooms, many simply have students engage in traditional information-gathering using the Internet, while few have students engage in higher order

[3] A portal is defined as a web page of links to other, related web pages. For example, BigChalk.com is a commercial site that 'mines' the web for web pages that relate to social studies, for example, and organize these sites by theme or content. Portal sites provide little content, but rather provide a service for teachers looking for lesson plans, etc.

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strategies such as WebQuests[4] (VanFossen, 2000, 2001). Thus, we were very interested in the types of teaching strategies presented in these sessions. We followed a procedure similar to that described above for developing these categories of analysis. Eight categories emerged: (1) teaching strategies employing communication strategies such as e-mail, listservs, discussion lists, or web-conferencing, (2) teaching strategies employing virtual fieldtrips[5], (3) teaching strategies employing on-line journaling, (4) teaching strategies employing use of web-based or digitized primary sources, (5) teaching strategies employing problem-based inquiry (such as WebQuests), (6) teaching strategies employing on-line simulations (e.g., the National Budget Simulation), (7) teaching strategies employing performance assessment and (8) teaching strategies employing information analysis/critique.[6] As with the previous analysis, we coded independently and then compared our analysis, eventually resolving any disagreements. Figure 3 presents illustrative examples of each of the eight categories.

Insert Figure 3 here

Results from both analyses were entered into a spreadsheet. Percentages were calculated for across each year for session type, presenter affiliation, focus of session and type of teaching strategy employed across each year. In addition, we calculated the

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[4] Such information gathering techniques might fall into 1.0 (Knowledge) on Bloom's Taxonomy of the Cognitive Domain. If students compare and contrast information sources or create new knowledge products from this search, then this might fall in 4.0 (Analysis) or 5.0 (Synthesis) on the Taxonomy. WebQuests (Dodge, 1998) are inquiry-oriented, web-based activities designed to focus on higher order thinking. Unfortunately, research indicates little higher order strategies are being employed.

[5] Defined for this study as a structured activity that required on line digital collections from museums or that harnessed digital video capabilities of the web such as the Space Shuttle cam.

[6] For example, judging the veracity of information sites. See Shiveley and VanFossen (1999) for other examples.

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proportion of Internet sessions as a proportion of total NCSS sessions for each year. These percentages were entered into tables and mean percentages calculated.

Findings

The findings from this study are organized into the following categories: number and percentage of Internet sessions presented (see Table 1); breakdown of Internet session by organizational affiliation and type of presenter (see Table 2); and by focus of Internet session presented (see Table 3). This final category includes a closer analysis of sessions categorized under the sub-heading of teaching strategies (see Table 4).

Number and Percentage of Internet Sessions at NCSS

Several points emerge from a review of the numbers and percentages of the Internet related sessions presented at NCSS since 1995. The first is the small number of such sessions actually provided, both in terms of absolute number and as a percentage of the total program. The number of Internet sessions presented ranged from a low of 8 in 1995 (as we expected) to a high of 52 in 1999. This upward trend seems logical enough at first glance, however, the number of Internet sessions then declined in 2000 (46) and did so again in 2001 (29). The average number of Internet sessions, presented over a seven-year period, was 35. This means that from 1995 to 2001 less than 5 percent of all NCSS sessions, on average, were focused on the Internet with a low of .95 percent in 1995 (again, not surprising), and a high of 8.21 percent in 2000. This percentage also dropped off in 2001.

We might conclude that while there has been a steady growth in the number and percentage of Internet related sessions presented at NCSS since 1995, this growth has not

been very substantial. From 1995 to 1997, both the absolute number and percentage of Internet sessions increased each year, but these trends have leveled off since 1997 with an actual decrease occurring during the past two annual conferences. As we will note later, there may be some factors that have contributed to this flattening out of the number of Internet sessions.

Insert Table 1 here

Internet Session by Type and Presenter Affiliation

Table 1 presents data regarding the breakdown of Internet sessions according to type of session – Pre-conference clinics, National Social Studies Supervisors Association (NSSSA), International Assembly, College and University Faculty Assembly (CUFA), or General Sessions/Workshops. In brief, NCSS Pre-Conference Clinics provide extended time to explore issues related to social studies education; NSSSA promotes the common interest of state-level social studies supervisors in instruction, curriculum materials, research, teacher training, and social action; the International Assembly provides a forum for collaboration and interchange of ideas among NCSS Members from the United States and foreign countries; and CUFA consists of higher education faculty members, graduate students, and others interested in the examination of social studies from more of a theoretical and discovery perspective. The general sessions and workshops are often hour-long sessions that provide information, techniques, and tips for teachers to use in their classrooms.

When we examine the data here, it is apparent that, in the absolute, the greatest number of Internet related sessions are consistently presented in general sessions.

However, the highest percentage of Internet sessions are, over time, presented in the pre-conference clinics, where perhaps additional time allows for more lengthy technology sessions. A third point related to organization affiliation is less obvious. The proportion of Internet sessions presented in The College and University Faculty Assembly (CUFA) program has consistently been at a rate below the NCSS average through the 2000 conference. Indeed, CUFA had either no sessions or only one session per year in the five years from 1995 to 1999. This may well be an accurate representation of the dearth of research on this issues in our field. These results are consistent with the scant literature on social studies teachers' use of the Internet.

Table 2 presents data on presenter affiliation. Our question was simply, "who is actually presenting these Internet sessions?" In spite of the fact that the membership of NCSS is overwhelmingly made up of K-12 practitioners[7], we found that the largest proportion of Internet sessions were provided by college and university faculty (on average, 45.2%). The combination of university faculty and K-12 practitioners accounted for over, on average, 70% of the session presentations each year. The other 30% of the presentions came from commercial affiliations, non-governmental organizations, and governmental agencies respectively. Individual years did provide some variance, however. For example, in 1998, K-12 practitioners represented the largest group, and in 2000 there were an equal number from each affiliation. This disparity grew to its widest point in 2001 with almost 45% of the sessions offered by university faculty and less than 8% were offered by K-12 practitioners.

[7] According to the NCSS Membership Office, of the approximately 22,000 NCSS members, 11,683 have reported an institutional affiliation. Of these, 10,509 (89.9%) indicated they were K-12 practitioners.

Insert Table 2 here

Focus of Internet Sessions Presented

Table 3 reports on the focus of the Internet sessions that were presented during the past seven years at NCSS. Three categories of session focus accounted for over 85% of the Internet sessions offered. On average, sessions that provided an overview or introduction to the Internet were offered just under 35% of the time, sessions dealing with various teaching strategies were offered about 30% of the time, and sessions that introduced a specific site or portal to the audience were offered nearly 21% of the time. Of these three types of sessions, two of them (introduction to/overview of the Internet; introduction to a specific web site or portal), combined to represent over 55% of all Internet sessions presented. We felt these categories represented a very basic or introductory level focus. Internet sessions devoted to teaching strategies were the most frequently occurring in 3 of the 7 years studied (1996, 1998, and 2001). In addition, sessions that introduced a particular site or portal, occurred most frequently in 1997, and second most frequently in three of the past four years.

The remaining three sessions focus categories accounted for a relatively minor proportion of total Internet session offerings (around 15%) with the largest of these three being the introduction, or the development, of Internet-based lesson plans. Once again the proportion of sessions that focused on research of the use of the Internet was very low, averaging 3% of all Internet sessions overall and ranging from 0% in 1995 to 5% in 1997.

Insert Table 3 here

The number of Internet sessions that focused on teaching strategies varied widely over the period we studied. The first year, 1995, saw but one session of this type and by 1998 this number jumped to 21. The number of sessions that focused on teaching strategies averaged just under 11 per year.

Of the eight categories of teaching strategies (described above), the most frequently presented was the use of the Internet to study or make available primary sources with twenty-four sessions, or 31.6% of the total for the years studied. Three other categories quickly follow: The use of email, listservs, chat rooms, or teleconferencing totaled 18 sessions or 20%, although 9 of these sessions were given in one year; the description of virtual fieldtrips that teachers could take on the Internet (12 sessions or 15.8%); and, problem-based inquiry or WebQuest type of strategies (also 12 sessions for 15.8%). These top four categories combined for 87% of the types of teaching strategies presented.

In contrast, the remaining four categories - journaling, on-line simulations, performance assessment, and information analysis – combined for only 10 sessions and 13% of the total number of teaching strategies presented. Three of these categories had only one or two such sessions, for a total of four, offered during the entire seven years of this study.

Insert Table 4 here

Discussion

We were somewhat surprised to note the general lack of Internet-related sessions presented at NCSS– both in terms of number and percentage of the total program--over the seven-year period studied. We anticipated that the numbers of Internet sessions offered would increase annually over the period studied and that this rate of increase would be fairly constant. Neither of these expectations held true. Not only was the percentage of Internet sessions low—in our estimation--on average (these sessions accounted for only 4.89 % of total sessions presented), but the number of sessions presented also did not steadily increase as we surmised. Internet sessions leveled off between 40 and 52 in the 4 years from 1997 through 2000 and even dropped off to 29 in 2001. It is interesting to note that during this same period the percentage of K-12 public schools with Internet access increased from 50% percent in 1995 to 99% in 2001 and the percentage of public school classrooms with Internet access increased from 8% in 1995 to 87% in 2001 (see Figure 4). It seems clear that the proportion of Internet sessions presented at the NCSS annual meeting did not increase at this same rate. This rate of increase did not reflect the degree that classroom social studies teachers desire to increase their Internet use (VanFossen, 2000).

Insert Figure 4 here

There are other factors that might be limiting the number of Internet sessions being offered. Two possibilities that occurred to us were the additional costs associated with presenting Internet sessions at the NCSS annual meeting, and the possibility that the limited room space made available for Internet sessions could be holding down the number of Internet sessions NCSS was able to accept. Each presenter who requires additional technology at his or her session must pay a $40.00 fee, in addition to the conference registration fee, to help offset the cost of providing computers and for the service of providing technology assistance for the presenters, if needed. This fee could very well be acting as a deterrent to presenting this type of session. The available room space, however, does not seem to be a limiting factor. Conference reviewers of technology session proposals have made an effort to make an adequate number of rooms available for the technology sessions proposed. During the years investigated in this study the number of rooms made available for presenters of technology sessions remained constant not because of some predetermined space limitation, but rather because the number of proposals being reviewed and the number accepted remained fairly steady at between 40-60. The acceptance rate for these proposals also remained high throughout, at around 70 %, reinforcing the point that the number of sessions presented was not limited by room space available at the conference alone. Those sessions that were presented did receive strong support from conference attendees. One conference reviewer shared that, while no data are kept on the exact number of attendees

at individual NCSS sessions, technology sessions have consistently been well-attended and have often had overflowing audiences.[8]

A second finding that merits further discussion was the general lack of research on the use of the Internet in social studies teaching that was presented at the NCSS annual meeting. Very few presentations discussed data on the how the Internet is being used in the classroom, on what "best Internet practice" might look like in the social studies classroom, or on the impact of Internet-related teaching on student learning. From 1995 to 2001, only 3.27% (8 out of 244)[9] of Internet sessions focused on research (only 0.2% of all NCSS sessions—8 out of 4,066—focused on research related to the Internet). This dearth of research on the Internet was also evident in the College and University Faculty Assembly (CUFA) program. CUFA, the organization most closely related to the research agenda of the social studies, consistently presented Internet sessions at a rate below the conference average: 2.86% of all CUFA sessions were related to the Internet compared to 4.89% of all NCSS sessions.

Why are these numbers so (apparently) low? Is research in this area not being conducted by social studies faculty or teachers? Is the technology-related research that is being done just not specific to the social studies? Is this research not finding an outlet for dissemination within our national organization? Why isn't Internet use in social studies classrooms being investigated more frequently? We believe all of these are questions that merit further investigation.

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[8] Dr. A. Willis, personal communication, November 7, 2002. Dr. Willis is past-President of the Computers and Social Education (CASE) Special Interest Group for NCSS and has been an officer in the CASE-SIG for the past 5 years.

[9] Note the total number of CUFA sessions devoted to the Internet from 1995 to 2001was slightly greater (10) as two sessions did not present data on Internet use directly.

Finally, after our detailed content analysis, we believe that the number of sessions devoted to an overview of, or an introduction to, the Internet presented at NCSS remains disproportionately high. While no true trend can be discerned (see Table 3), we noticed that the number of these types of sessions has remained fairly constant over the period in question. We might have expected that during the first few years of Internet use in the classroom, a high number of sessions would have such a basic focus, but, as we would have expected Internet use became more common-place in the classroom, we would also expect the proportion of these types of sessions—especially at a high-profile national conference such as NCSS—diminish over time and be replaced by more complex or sophisticated session. To date, this has not occurred. Furthermore, those sessions that have focused on, for example, teaching strategies using the Internet, display a relatively narrow number of examples, with four types of teaching strategies accounting for 87% of the sessions presented.

Of course the simple presence of more Internet sessions does not necessarily reflect what was happening on a daily basis in the typical social studies teacher's classroom. It may very well be that our 'sample' here is not representative of the field. We will concede this point. However, we made the assumption that the 'skewness' of our sample is positive. That is, that we expect that those educators that make it a point to belong to a national organization and to present at a national conference are likely to be among the best in that field and, therefore, more likely to be on the forward edge of instructional methodology. So, when we find that the Internet sessions being presented are relatively few in number (and decreasing in proportion) and basic in content, it gives us pause. We ask what actually is going on in the typical social studies classroom? Are the sessions

being presented at NCSS representative of what is currently being practiced in the classroom? Will the focus of these types of sessions move beyond the preliminary stage in coming years? Are those social studies teachers who are defining best practice teaching with technology simply not sharing their efforts on the national level? Does such lack of variety indicate a subsequent lack of development of how the Internet is used in the typical social studies classroom? Again, unfortunately, the answers to such questions are beyond the scope of this study.

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EXAMPLE:

Internet Activities for Social Studies
This online session is designed to help educators locate Internet exercises and activities which they can integrate into their social studies curriculum. Come to discover the wealth of Internet-oriented lesson plans available online as we discuss implementation plans and integration strategies. (general session abstract, 1998)

NON-EXAMPLE

Word Play—Celebration of Culture: Original Toys Children Make
This session will introduce a program that teaches culture through play in the classroom. The program features children's original handmade toys from diverse cultures. Examples will be drawn from the toys, an Internet site (www.worldplay.org) and the Smithsonian international festival to be held in 2000. (general session abstract, 1998)

Figure 1. Example and non-example of NCSS session abstracts with an Internet focus.

Overview of Internet/introduction to Internet integration	Internet Activities for Social Studies This online session is designed to help educators locate internet exercises and activities which they can integrate into their social studies curriculum. Come to discover the wealth of Internet-oriented lesson plans available online as we discuss implementation plans and integration strategies.
Teaching strategies	Using the World Wide Web for Reflective Journaling Participants will be provided with examples of reflective journaling on the Internet and ways in which this journal can be used in the feedback loop
Introduction of or developing lesson plans	Designing Internet Lesson Plans Participants will learn how to design their own Internet activities and keep students engaged online. Online activities are currently available to be reviewed and strategies for designing web exercises will be discussed. Participants will have time to design their own online activities.
Web publishing	Building Your Own Web Pages Geared for beginners, this hands-on workshop introduces the basics of interactive design, working with text and graphics, and publishing on the World Wide Web. Participants will review exemplary school sites with an eye towards getting projects on-line.
Intro to specific site/portal	Social Studies.Gov: Social Studies Web Resources for the U.S. Government This session will tour government-sponsored web sites that contain content useful for teaching U.S. history, world history, government, geography, economics, and more.
Research on Internet use	The Internet as a Teaching and Learning Tool This session will examine the complexities of Internet use in educational contexts. Findings from the initial phase of a longitudinal study of the Internet in schools and home schooling will be highlighted.

Figure 2. Examples of types of Internet sessions presented at NCSS, 1995-2001.

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Use of: email/listservs/chats or Web/teleconferencing	The Internet: A Powerful Tool for Social Studies Educators. The presenters will demonstrate the use of e-mail and listserves as unique communications tools, web-based publishing, and information processing techniques. All of these means by which educators and students can obtain, exchange and analyze information spanning cultural and geographic boundaries.
Virtual fieldtrips	Taking an Internet field trip: Technology in the Social Studies. This session will illustrate how teachers can take students on an internet field trip. Potential sites will be described and sample materials will be presented.
Primary sources	Internet Resources for History/Social Studies Educators. Educators are invited to visit content-rich web sites, and track down primary source documents, lesson plans, student projects, and on-line activities in this hands-on workshop. Taught by a classroom teacher with practical experience, this session will also cover strategies for integrating the Internet into the classroom and curriculum
Journaling	Using the World Wide Web for Reflective Journaling. Participants will be provided with examples of reflective journaling on the Internet and ways in which this journal can be used in the feedback loop.
Problem-based inquiry/Webquests	Technology-Assisted Project-Based Learning: Constructivist Teaching At Its Best. A team of college faculty and K-8 teachers present a series of WebQuests developed around a social studies/ humanities theme and featuring the use of technology in problem investigation. Included in the presentation is a discussion on how the WebQuests are implemented in K-8 classrooms.
On-line simulations	Decisions, Decisions: Updated award winning classics. Participants will experience award-winning history simulation software, with new writing, multimedia, and Internet features. New titles include "The Cold War" and "Ancient Empires.
Performance assessment	History Education Paradigm Shift: Electronic and Internet-Based Performance Assessment. This session introduces strategies and activities designed to incorporate electronic and internet-based performance assessment into secondary history education. An overview, including sample lessons/activities, are provided.
Information analysis/critique	Internet or InterNOT: A Critical look at the potential and pitfalls of the WWW! This session focuses on effective use of the WWW and other multimedia for enhancing social studies, critical thinking, and student research skills. Considers potentials and pitfalls of current technology.

Figure 3. Examples of types of teaching strategies presented in NCSS Internet sessions, 1995-2001.

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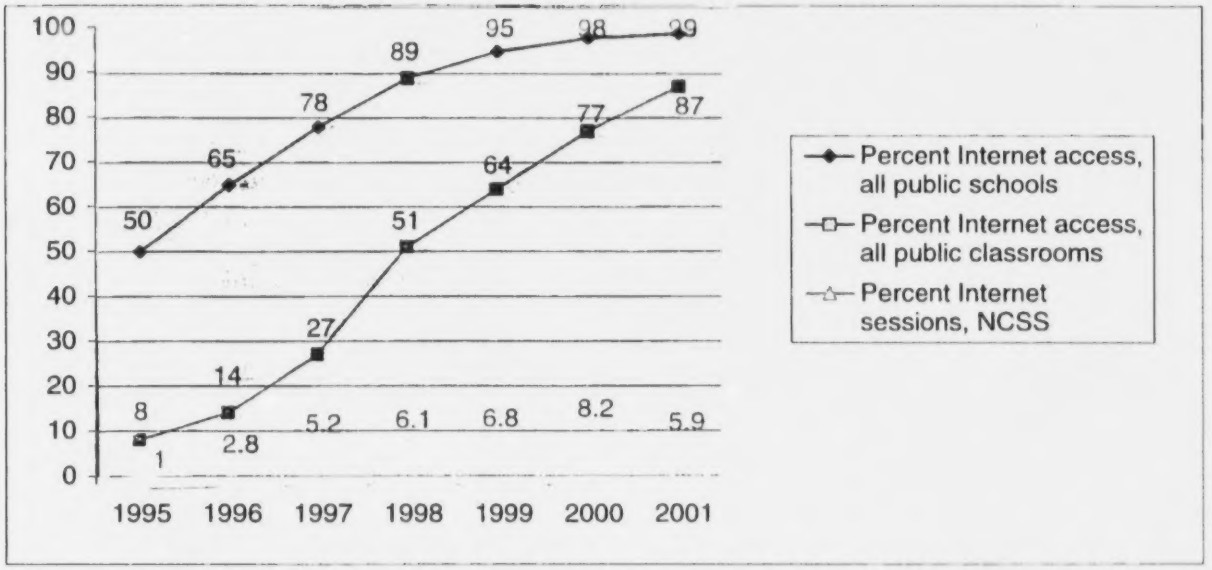

Figure 4. Internet access in public schools and classrooms with NCSS Internet sessions, 1995-2001.

Table 1. Internet/WWW Sessions as a percentage of all NCSS sessions, 1995-2001.

	Type of Session					
	Clinic	**CUFA**	**NSSSA**	**Int. Assembly**	**General**	*TOTALS*
1995						
Sessions/papers	37	36	37	16	713	**839**
Internet/WWW sessions	2	1	0	1	4	**8**
Percent Internet/WWW	*5.41*	*2.78*	*0.00*	*6.25*	*.56*	***.95***
1996						
Sessions/papers	36	45	26	14	660	**781**
Internet/WWW sessions	2	1	0	0	19	**22**
Percent Internet/WWW	*5.56*	*2.22*	*0.00*	*0.00*	*2.88*	***2.82***
1997						
Sessions/papers	59	48	13	11	639	**770**
Internet/WWW sessions	4	0	2	0	34	**40**
Percent Internet/WWW	*6.78*	*0.00*	*15.38*	*0.00*	*5.32*	***5.19***
1998						
Sessions	25	43	41	23	637	**769**
Internet/WWW sessions	2	0	3	1	41	**47**
Percent Internet/WWW	*8.00*	*0.00*	*7.31*	*4.35*	*6.44*	***6.11***
1999						
Sessions	20	68	39	35	605	**767**
Internet/WWW sessions	4	1	3	1	43	**52**
Percent Internet/WWW	*20.00*	*1.47*	*7.69*	*2.86*	*7.11*	***6.78***
2000						
Sessions	18	61	42	11	438	**570**
Internet/WWW sessions	1	3	3	1	38	**46**
Percent Internet/WWW	*.56*	*4.92*	*7.14*	*9.09*	*8.68*	***8.21***
2001						
Sessions	19	49	31	20	373	**492**
Internet/WWW sessions	4	4	0	1	20	**29**
Percent Internet/WWW	*21.05*	*8.16*	*0.00*	*5.00*	*5.32*	***5.89***
Average percent Internet sessions, 1995-2001	**8.88**	**2.86**	**4.80**	**3.85**	**4.80**	**4.89**

Table 2. Percentage of sessions/papers by affiliation of presenters, 1995-2001.

	Year							
Presenter affiliation	1995 (n=8)	1996 (n=22)	1997 (n=40)	1998 (n=47)	1999 (n=52)	2000 (n=46)	2001 (n=29)	**1995-2001 Avg.**
K-12 practitioner	25.00%	18.18%	20.00%	31.91%	28.85%	32.61%	27.59%	26.31%
University/College	75.00%	54.55%	47.50%	25.53%	36.54%	32.61%	44.83%	45.22%
Government agency	0.00%	4.55%	5.00%	2.13%	9.62%	0.00%	10.34%	4.52%
NGO	0.00%	4.55%	20.00%	14.89%	15.38%	17.39%	6.90%	11.30%
Commercial	0.00%	18.18%	10.00%	25.53%	11.54%	17.39%	6.90%	12.79%
Other	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%

Table 3. Percentage of NCSS Internet sessions by focus, 1995-2001.

	Year							
Focus of session	1995 (n=8)	1996 (n=22)	1997 (n=40)	1998 (n=47)	1999 (n=52)	2000 (n=46)	2001 (n=29)	Average 1995-2001
Overview of Internet or introduction to Internet integration	75.00%	36.36%	10.00%	25.53%	46.15%	32.61%	17.24%	34.70%
Teaching strategies	12.50%	45.45%	30.00%	44.68%	17.31%	26.09%	37.93%	30.57%
Web publishing	0.00%	0.00%	5.00%	0.00%	7.69%	2.17%	6.90%	3.11%
Introduction to specific site or portal	0.00%	9.09%	35.00%	36.17%	19.23%	21.74%	24.14%	20.77%
Introduction of/developing lesson plans	12.50%	9.09%	10.00%	23.40%	5.77%	6.52%	6.90%	10.60%
Research on Internet use	0.00%	4.55%	5.00%	0.00%	3.85%	4.35%	3.45%	3.03%

Table 4. Type of strategy presented in NCSS Internet sessions focused on teaching, 1995 – 2001.

	Year								
Type of Teaching Strategy	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	Total (1995-2001)	Percent of total
Use of: e-mail/listservs/chats or web/teleconferencing	1	3	2	9	0	3	0	18	23.7%
Virtual fieldtrips	0	1	3	3	2	1	2	12	15.8%
Primary sources	0	3	3	5	6	3	4	24	31.6%
Journaling	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	1.3%
Problem-based inquiry/WebQuests	0	0	3	1	1	4	3	12	15.8%
On-line simulations	0	2	0	2	0	0	2	6	7.9%
Performance assessment	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	2	2.6%
Information analysis/critique	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	1.3%
Total teaching sessions	**1**	**10**	**12**	**21**	**9**	**12**	**11**	**76**	

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